Amendments to the Claims:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

Listing of Claims:

1. (Currently Amended) A piston ring made of material having a self-lubricating sliding property, which consists of a steel comprising, by mass, from not less than 0.4 % to less than 1.3 % of C (carbon), 0.1 to 3.0 % of Si, 0.1 to 3.0 % of Mn, from zero (inclusive) to 0.5 % of Cr, 0.05 to 3.0 % of Ni, 0.7 to 2.0 % of Al, 0.3 to 20 % in total (Mo + W + V) of at least one element selected from the group consisting of Mo, W (tungsten) and V (vanadium), and 0.05 to 3.0 % of Cu, wherein ~~there can be observed~~ graphite particles having an average particle size of not more than 3 μm are present in a section of a metal structure of ~~a~~ the steel.

2. (Currently Amended) A piston ring according to claim ~~1~~ 25, wherein the graphite particles ~~observed~~ present in the section of the metal structure occupy an area rate of not less than 1 % in the overall area of the section, and have an average particle size of not more than 3 μm.

3. (Currently Amended) A piston ring according to claim ~~1~~ 25, wherein no vanadium carbides are observed in the section of the metal structure.

4. (Currently Amended) A piston ring according to claim ~~1~~ 25, wherein the steel contains, by mass, 0.3 to 5.0 % in total (Mo + W) of at least one element selected from the group consisting of Mo and W, and less than 0.1 % of V.

5. (Canceled).

6. (Currently Amended) A piston ring according to claim ~~1~~ 25, wherein the steel contains, by mass, 1.5 to 3.0 % of Mo.

7. (Currently Amended) A piston ring according to claim ~~1~~ 25, wherein the steel contains, by mass, not more than 10 % of Co.

8. (Currently Amended) A piston ring according to claim ~~1~~ 25, wherein the steel contains, by mass, not more than 0.3 % of S (sulfur).

9. (Previously Presented) A piston ring according to claim 8, wherein the steel further contains, by mass, not more than 0.01 % Ca.

10. (Currently Amended) A piston ring according to claim ~~1~~ 25, wherein the steel has been subjected to nitriding treatment to use as sliding parts.

11. (Currently Amended) A piston ring made from a wire material, which consists of a steel comprising, by mass, from not less than 0.4 % to less than 1.3 % of C (carbon), 0.1 to 3.0 % of Si, 0.1 to 3.0 % of Mn, from zero (inclusive) to 0.5 % of Cr, 0.05 to 3.0 % of Ni, 0.7 to 2.0 % of Al, 0.3 to 20 % in total (Mo + W + V) of at least one element selected from the group consisting of Mo, W (tungsten) and V (vanadium), ~~and~~ 0.05 to 3.0 % of Cu and S (sulfur), wherein ~~there can be observed~~ graphite particles having an average particle size of not more than 3 μm are present in a section of a metal structure of the steel, and wherein sulfide inclusions observed in the section of the metal structure, being parallel to the periphery of the piston ring, are distributed such that straight lines each passing through a major axis of the respective sulfide inclusion cross one another within a cross angle of not more than 30 degrees which angle is referred to as a degree of parallelism.

12. (Currently Amended) A piston ring according to claim ~~1~~ 123, wherein graphite particles ~~observed~~ present in the section of the metal structure occupy an area rate of not less than 1 % in the overall area of the section, and have an average particle size of not more than 3 μm.

13. (Currently Amended) A piston ring according to claim ~~11~~ 23, wherein the steel contains, by mass, not more than 10 % of Co.

14. (Currently Amended) A piston ring according to claim ~~11~~ 23, wherein the steel contains, by mass, not more than 0.3 % of S (sulfur).

15. (Previously Presented) A piston ring according to claim 14, wherein the steel further contains, by mass, not more than 0.01 % of Ca.

16. (Currently Amended) A piston ring according to claim ~~11~~ 23, wherein the steel has been subjected to nitriding treatment to use as piston rings.

17. (Currently Amended) A piston ring according to claim ~~11~~ 23, wherein the steel has been forged, drawn and/or rolled from an ingot.

18. (Previously Presented) A piston ring according to claim 17, wherein the wire material has been annealed and subjected to quenching and tempering.

19.-21. (Canceled).

22. (New) A piston ring according to claim 11, wherein the steel contains, by mass, from zero (inclusive) to 0.3% of Cr.

23. (New) A piston ring according to claim 11, wherein the steel contains, by mass, from zero (inclusive) to 0.25% of Cr.

24. (New) A piston ring according to claim 1, wherein the steel contains, by mass, from zero (inclusive) to 0.3% of Cr.

25. (New) A piston ring according to claim 1, wherein the steel contains, by mass, from zero (inclusive) to 0.25% of Cr.